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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BRASILIA 000516

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DEPARTMENT FOR D, P, T, WHA, AND PM

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: DEFENSE PLAN PREVIEW GETS THUMBS UP IN CONGRESS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Phil Chicola. Reasons 1.4 B and

¶1. (U) Summary: Previewing their Strategic Plan on National Defense (scheduled to be unveiled on September 7, 2008) in Congress for the first time on April 9, Minister of Defense Nelson Jobim and Long-Term Planning Minister Mangabeira Unger were met with an overwhelmingly positive response from members of the Chamber of Deputies' External Relations and National Defense Committee (CREDN) during a public hearing. The plan, an ambitious soup-to-nuts transformation of Brazil's national defense structure, charts a new strategic direction by re-defining the key threats Brazil faces, reorganizing and reequipping its forces around those threats, and redeveloping an autonomous defense industry that can be an engine for the development of advanced technology. Although both ministers called for a national conversation on long-ignored defense and national security issues, the preview generated little in-depth discussion of the threats or premises-- even those with a subtle but not entirely veiled anti-American bent to them-- underlying the reforms. Judging by the uncritical reception they received, Jobim and Unger's national defense plan may meet little resistance in Congress when it is unveiled later this year. End summary.

First, Define the Threats...

¶2. (C) On April 9, CREDN convened a hearing to preview the work of the recently convened intra-governmental committee created to craft a Strategic Plan for National Defense and to discuss Jobim and Unger's recent travels to France and Russia earlier this year. The government committee, chaired by Jobim, coordinated by Unger, with participation of the three force commanders, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning, and the Ministry of Science and Technology, seeks, according to Jobim and Unger, to resurrect the issue national defense from the "authoritarian debris" left behind with the end of the military regime and place it firmly in the national consciousness. Unger noted that their intent is not to come with a plan to merely re-arm the Brazilian armed

forces and update old technology but a plan to achieve nothing less than a comprehensive reform of all the constituent parts of Brazil's national defense infrastructure. (Comment: It is no accident that the Ministry of External Relations (MRE) is not represented on the committee. Jobim and Unger purposefully made sure MRE was not represented, a move that apparently angered MRE officials and is likely the reason MRE is trying to keep Jobim on a short leash as he consults with other countries. End comment.)

13. (U) According to Jobim, the committee's first task is to define the threats that need to be defended against. Only after defining the threats could they begin to study how to restructure the forces, redeploy them if necessary, reformulate doctrine to conform to the newly defined threats, retrain them in accordance with new doctrines, and reequip them to fulfill the missions. Because Brazil lacks territorial ambitions or outstanding border disputes, Jobim and Unger identified the missions as: monitoring and protection of land, sea, and air boundaries in peacetime; protection from regional warfare outside Brazil's borders; defense against invasion by a conventional force; and asymmetrical warfare in the Amazon by either an unconventional force or by a conventional force with backing from a more powerful outside power.

...Then Reorganize and Rearm Around the Threats

14. (U) After outlining the hypothetical threats being

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considered, Jobim proceeded to outline how the posited threats would impact decisions on reform. For example, noting that only about 27,000 of about 300,000 active members of all three branches of the Brazilian armed forces serve in the Amazon region, Jobim questioned whether it was prudent to maintain the bulk of the forces deployed in the west and south of the country if a principal mission would be to protect the Amazon and the western borders. He also questioned whether it made sense to keep Brazil's rapid reaction forces headquartered in the south instead of the center-west, where they can more quickly deploy to any part of the country.

15. (U) For his part, Unger noted their plan sought answers to fundamental issues each of the services face:

- For the Air Force, is it best to invest in joint-production of 4th generation jet fighters, invest in modernizing the existing jet fighter fleet, or invest in a 5th generation fighter?

- For the Navy: Its geographical positioning needs to be resolved. The bulk of the fleet cannot continue to be based out of Rio de Janeiro. Increasing the number of submarines may mean reducing the number of surface ships, therefore, Unger noted, trade-offs will have to be made.

- For the Army: Brazil's rapid reaction capability amounts to ten percent of the total force. Should this capacity move to a larger percentage of the force based on the hypothetical threats Brazil is facing?

- Space: What should Brazil's capabilities be? At a minimum, according to Unger, Brazil needs to have a presence in order to monitor its borders.

A New Defense Industry: Seeking Strategic Partners

16. (U) Both Jobim and Unger focused a part of their presentation to highlighting the need for Brazil to

reestablish an autonomous defense industry. In pursuit of that goal, Jobim and Unger recently traveled together to Russia and France, and Unger to India. (Note: Jobim also mentioned that he had recently visited the United States, although he did dwell on it. End note.) Both noted that they were not seeking to purchase products off the shelf as in a supermarket, but instead they are looking to build Brazil's own industrial capacity. Unger further stressed that an autonomous defense industry will require legislation establishing a preferential regulatory framework and granting tax incentives to private defense companies in exchange for strategic direction. State companies, on the other hand, will focus on basic and advanced research that the private companies cannot undertake because it cannot be quickly commercialized. In furtherance of this goal, Jobim and Unger will be hosting delegations from France and Russia in the next week (Note: According to an article in the 16 April daily newspaper Correio Braziliense, a Russian delegation was in Brasilia this week to discuss the joint development of jet fighters. End note.)

Flexing Regional Leadership Muscles Defense Council:

¶7. (U) During the hearing, Jobim also focused on the Brazilian proposal to create a South American Defense Council (SADC) that he stated, would help place Brazil in a leadership role within the region after having its back turned to Latin American since imperial days. Jobim indicated he would be flying to Colombia, Peru, Ecuador,

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Paraguay, and Chile soon to seek support for the SADC, a concept for which Brazil had made no definitive designs but which did not follow the classic model of a military alliance such as NATO. (Note: Press reports out of Jobim's April 14 meeting with Venezuelan President Chavez in Caracas highlighted this aspect of Jobim's concept and reported that Chavez had agreed. End note.) Some of the goals of the SADC, he noted, would be to stimulate the creation of a common South American defense identity; establish confidence-building measures; develop programs for the exchange and common training of personnel; train for joint peacekeeping operations; possibly develop coordinated actions against transnational crime; and integrate the regional defense industrial base. Principally, he noted, it will serve to develop and reinforce the need for South America to speak with one voice in international fora, and for the region to come up with its own solutions, rather than having them imposed from outsiders.

Enthusiastic, Uncritical Congressional Reaction:

¶8. (U) Jobim's and Unger's presentations elicited mostly unanimous praise and uncritical observations from the Federal Deputies who attended the hearing. Chairman Marcondes Gadelha (Brazilian Socialist Party, PSB, governing coalition; of Pernambuco) called the hearing a historic occasion and referred to the strategic plan as the new foundation of national defense in Brazil, expressions which were echoed by several other members, who had few questions. The one exception came from Federal Deputy Raul Jungmann (PPS, Socialist People's Party, opposition; of Pernambuco). Jungmann questioned the motivation behind a partnership with France to jointly produce military technologies such as a nuclear submarine, noting that France is responsible for only a tiny fraction of the global nuclear submarine fleet built over the past decade. In response, Unger argued that France was not only interested in sharing its technology, but was interested in a strategic partnership that goes beyond technological development. Jungmann also questioned whether there was contemplation of terrorism as a threat. "Terrorism is not an internal problem," Jobim responded, adding that of

greater concern was the possible asymmetrical threat from non-terrorist groups such as the FARC.

Comment:

19. (C) The hearing represented the first attempt to preview the national defense plan before Congress and, considering it exposed no fissures between the GoB's and Congress' views on the country's national defense needs, has to be considered a success for Jobim and Unger. The hearing made clear that, for Jobim and Unger, the calculus driving decisions on weapons purchases will not be whether to equip the forces with the best or most advanced technology, but what makes the most sense for Brazil economically and politically. That seeking deals with France and Russia went mostly unquestioned probably reflects Congress's lack of engagement at this point. But it also shows that partnering with the United States is not a natural direction here, and that it will not take much for Congress to accept the premise, argued by some here, that the U.S. is not a viable partner because of what they view as overly restrictive technology sharing rules. At the same time, Congress's newfound interest in the issue suggests they might be interested and open to persuasion regarding the potential benefits of cooperation with the United States. Furthermore, the paranoia about a foreign invasion of the Amazon by a more powerful actor--a clear reference to the long-held fear that the US military has designs on the Amazon--remains alive and well. By making

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this one of the central threats Brazil will be preparing for, Jobim and Unger will, unfortunately, perpetuate this fear into the foreseeable future. End comment.
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